

ADDRESS,

DELIVERED BY

WILLIAM PRICE, ESQ. A. M.

BEFORE THE

ALUMNI ASSOCIATION OF

DICKINSON COLLEGE,


AT THEIR ANNUAL MEETING IN

CARLISLE, PA.

September 21st, 1830.

CARLISLE:

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CARLISLE, September 22d, 1830.

Dr. Sir:

In pursuance of a resolution, unanimously adopted by the Alumni Association of Dickinson College, we respectfully request of you, for publication, a copy of your excellent address, delivered last evening in the Presbyterian Church.

We are, very respectfully,

Dr. Sir,

Your obedient servants.

GEORGE METZGER,
SAM'L. ALEXANDER,
JAMES HAMILTON,
JAMES H. GRAHAM,
BENJ'N. PATTON, jr.

} Committee.

To WILLIAM PRICE, Esq.

CARLISLE, September 22d, 1830.

Gentlemen:

In compliance with your request, I herewith furnish you with a copy of my address, delivered before the Alumni Association of Dickinson College, for publication.

Very respectfully,

Your obedient servant,

WM. PRICE.

To Messrs

GEO. METZGAR,
SAM'L. ALEXANDER,
JAMES HAMILTON,
JAMES H. GRAHAM,
BENJ'N. PATTON, jr.

} Committee.

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

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ADDRESS.

GENTLEMEN ALUMNI:

It was a favourite maxim of Sir Wm. Jones', that whatever had been done by other men, he was capable of doing. He has left us no account of the means, by which he became persuaded of the truth of this maxim; it is certain however, that the uncommon extent of his acquirements, in the various departments of literature and science, are attributable, in a great measure, to the force of this early persuasion. No distrust of his own powers, no doubt of his ultimate success, was permitted, for a moment, to impede his progress; and while an ordinary student would have stood appalled at the forbidding aspect of an undertaking, Sir William would be advancing with unfaltering step towards its accomplishment. So it is, in all the concerns, both physical and moral, of mankind; courage and constancy, are sufficient, under ordinary circumstances, to ensure success, while habits of hesitation and despondency, are as sure to prevent it. The difference between those, whom men call fortunate and unfortunate, successful and unsuccessful, will be found perhaps upon a nearer view, to be in reality, between those who yield to the pressure of adverse circumstances, and such as never yield nor bend while they have strength to exert themselves. Whence the disparity then, it may be asked, which we see in the intellectual stature of men? Do we all receive from the bounty of nature the same advantages, and do we differ only in the manner we improve them? By no means; it cannot be said that Shakspeare and Milton and Byron were ordinary men; but whether an individual be blest with natural endowments, either greater or less than the average share of his fellow creatures, is to be ascertained only by the event of fair and just trial. This is a question which cannot be solved before hand; it looks to the result, and is only to be known by the *event*. The phrenologists to be sure, settle the matter in their own way, and determine whether a man is to be learned or ignorant, poetical or prosaic, by the bumps upon his head; but as they do not pretend to furnish any process for *making* great men; and profess nothing more, than a new mode of distinguishing men who *are* great, from those who are not; we are still left to our exertions in the old fashioned manner of becoming distin-

guished. We must, therefore, neglect no means of improvement within our reach, and whatever the event may be, we may rest content that the developments of our craniums will be found to corroborate it.

The natural inequality of mankind is by no means so great as is generally supposed. It must strike the attention of every one who looks narrowly into the lives of those, who have been distinguished among men, that their superiority has, for the most part, been but the adequate result of the means used to attain it. Cicero was perhaps the greatest man of the ancient world; but all the accounts of him which have been handed down to us, concur in the fact, that his industry surpassed that of other men, in the same proportion as did his talents. Could we accompany such a man as Cicero from the first dawns of intellect, through the different stages of his progress to greatness; could we see him through the whole series of his early efforts, his subsequent endeavours, repetitions and corrections; were it given us to witness his preparations, but for one of his immortal displays in the Forum, both our admiration and astonishment, it is more than likely, would be greatly diminished. I mention the name of Cicero, only as a conspicuous example, of the labor necessary to true greatness; but the same truth is exemplified in all the great literary names of the world. We accustom ourselves to look at men as they are, and gaze in senseless astonishment at the grandeur of their existing intellectual elevation, without looking back for a moment to the means, by which they became distinguished, and of which we are beholding the adequate results. Those means, it must never be forgotten, lie open to the use, if not of all, of at least the greater portion of our race. Much is said about natural gifts, and peculiar aptitudes, but I have seldom seen a man distinguished for his dulness, who had made a decent use of the advantages by which he was surrounded.

A knowledge of ourselves, lies at the bottom of all human wisdom; and the man, who would lay hold of the admiration of the world, must draw the elements of his power from within himself. 'Know thyself,' was a favorite maxim of the ancient Greeks. It was regarded by them as significant of every thing excellent in mind, or becoming in life. But it may be asked, what am I to learn of, or how am I to know myself. This frame, this machine so wonderfully contrived, which carries about my soul from place to place, and for whose sake I am willing to undergo the greatest hardships and privations, will to be sure lie down, and arise, will come and go, according to my bidding; but its structure and operations, its accidents and affections, have some other master, and refuse obedience to my volitions. The food that I provide to sustain its existence, nourishes it or not, according to

a will which is without me, and which acknowledges no sympathy with my likes or dislikes. Even the heart that palpitates in my bosom, the seat and centre of my fondest emotions, I have never seen; it is locked up against my scrutiny, and to touch it were instant death. How then am I to know myself, when all within me, and without me, is shrouded in mystery? The answer is that we know more of ourselves, than we can know of the rest of our species. Thorough and perfect knowledge is not given to us upon any subject; there is always something behind, which eludes our enquiries and mocks our hope. But as our business through life is, with the works and concerns of men, human nature is a study, which forces itself upon us wherever we may be, or whatever may be our employment. The surest way, then, to acquire a knowledge of our species, is to observe, and as far as practicable, to understand the various moral and intellectual phenomena that take place within ourselves. Every man will find that he may reason with unerring truth, from the impulses of his own will, the emotions of his own heart, and the operations of his own intellect, to those of every individual of the human family. Let an individual be selected from all the known varieties of our species, and if it could be done, from the different ages of the world: place them in the same group and let the same train of thought, through some medium sufficient for the purpose, be called up at the same time, in the minds of the whole mass, and the effect, which it is found to produce upon one, it will produce upon all. They will all weep or smile, or grow sad or merry, or indignant or delighted, together. Whatever the difference may be in their complexion, or their tongues, their climates, religion, laws or customs, their hearts will speak one and the same language, and beat in union to the same emotions of sorrow or joy. It is necessary that this should be so. Man was intended as a social being, fitted by his Creator for the society and fellowship of his species. It was intended that men should aid and comfort and enlighten each other; that the moral advancement of the individual should enure to the benefit of his species; and that during the series of ages, they might continue to inhabit this earth, each succeeding generation might, in regard to every thing that is fitted to exalt and dignify our race, begin the world at the point where the preceding one had left it. Accordingly there are no assignable limits to the intimacy of that communion, which men are capable of maintaining with each other. The refined and evanescent speculations of the metaphysician, elaborated in the secrecy of his closet, are no sooner communicated to his fellow creatures, than the same speculations arise in their minds and dwell in their memories. The airy creations of the poet, in which the lights and shades of the moral world,

are blended in new proportions of beauty, arise before the intellectual vision of all other men in the same forms and colours of harmony and loveliness. The whole human family exhibit in the different individuals, of which it is composed, but endless repetitions of the same moral and social phenomena. Know thyself therefore, and thou wilt have nothing to learn from the rest of thy kindred. Know thyself, and thou wilt carry about thee, an epitome of all that is instructive, and dignified, and ennobling, in human nature.

The character of this Association supposes the matter of education to have been already disposed of; I have nothing, therefore, to say upon the subject of Academical instruction. Our business now is with the active concerns and duties of life, in which each of us must perform the part allotted to him, in the best manner that he may. Whatever be the stations in life, which individually we may be, or have been called to fill, whether in the learned professions, in the halls of legislation, or in the more humble relations of private life, the season and the motive for profitable study has just commenced. The great mass of the enlightened classes pass through the forms of education, as a task set before them, which they feel rejoiced when they have finished, and to which they never return. Of those, who, after obtaining their diplomas, evince an anxiety for further improvement, the greater portion are doomed to find their labors barren, and their exertions without profit, from the fact that they are badly directed. Their great error consists in laboring exclusively to become the mere recipients of intellectual stores, without even calling into action those more efficient powers of the mind, by which those stores are to be disbursed. What signifies it, that a man possesses all the knowledge and science, that have been accumulated by the different ages of the world, if he be incapable of imparting it to others. A man's standing in the world, either in point of usefulness or reputation, will always be proportionate, not to what he knows or understands, but to the impulses, which he communicates to the minds of other men. This is indeed the great purpose of acquiring knowledge, because that knowledge, which remains unknown to the world, is, as to the world, and perhaps even to its possessor, as if it did not exist.

There is no subject of consideration more mysterious or more perplexing, than the metaphysical structure and operations of the mind, nor is it my purpose to involve this audience in its abstract mazes. It cannot however be unintelligible to any thinking man, to discriminate between those intellectual functions which supply the mind with materials of thought and reflection, and the direct action of thought and reflection, upon the materials thus collected. In the one case we employ merely the faculty of intellection,

while the more active and moral energies, remain in a state of repose. The task is completed, when we have apprehended the subject presented to us, and have placed it under the guardianship of the memory. In the other case the labor is not so light; the reasoning powers require that our mental stores should be arranged according to the known principles of moral similitude; that propositions should be compared, and the results carried out; and that what is perceived and felt by ourselves, should be made equally obvious to others. These are operations, which employ all the higher powers of the mind, but which are never concerned, except in the disbursement of our intellectual stores. But this active exertion of our faculties, is more laborious, than the merely passive reception by the mind, of whatever we may pour into it, and therefore it is that this only profitable mode of study is so rarely adopted.

To accustom the mind to an active and energetic exertion of its powers will, no doubt, require an effort; but the only effort, that seems to be necessary, is in beginning upon a proper system, and in adhering to it, until it becomes habitual. The labour will then insensibly diminish, as our faculties become more accustomed to the new mode of employment—until the whole in time becomes a positive pleasure. The most common mode, in which men of study waste their lives, and enervate their minds, is in reading every thing, and in reflecting upon nothing that they read. They peruse a book with attention, it may be, then lay it aside, and without ever recurring to the author, or his subject, take it for granted that they have made the acquisition of a certain amount of useful knowledge. And yet how little of all they have read can they apply to any useful purpose, much less communicate to others. That time, which is consumed in reading what the mind fails to incorporate with the texture of its own thoughts, is lost time, and might as well be passed in idleness. Every man should think for himself upon all subjects, and when he reads a book, he should use the thoughts of the author only as auxiliary to his own. No mere reader ever became distinguished even for his learning.

Writing and speaking are the modes, in which the active powers of the mind are evolved. Lord Bacon says that writing makes a profound man; and it is very questionable, whether any subject of difficulty can be so easily and thoroughly comprehended, in any other manner, as by embodying in written composition, the knowledge of it, which we acquire from books or from our own reflections. In the process of writing our thoughts are spread before us one by one, as they occur; the train of reasoning is preserved on the paper, and the mind acts with circumspection and deliberation, and upon

a single point at a time. If we become weary we can break off at any point, and again resume it at the same. In addition to the habit of close and accurate thinking, into which the mind is schooled by the practice of written composition, the student is enabled to form and improve his style, there being nothing to interfere with his selection of words, and the adjustment of phrases. In the same manner he will acquire the important art of arranging his topics in their natural and proper order, and of grouping kindred suggestions under their appropriate heads and divisions. Writing is therefore the groundwork of all profitable study. Mr. Brougham thinks that the frequent habit of elaborating written composition, is indispensable to every species of literary and scientific excellence; that no man ever became distinguished as a ready and powerful debater, who had not laboriously prepared himself in this manner, and that all the instances that may be cited to the contrary, are only apparently so.

What are the powers or faculties of the mind that we call into action in reading a book or hearing a lecture? Nothing more than simple intellection: If our reasoning faculties act at all, it is merely as auxiliary to the understanding; fancy, imagination, invention, wit and ratiocination are all asleep. The mind acts as a mere recipient,—as the mere keeper of other mens' thoughts, without involving any of its own. It is true that a mere reader may receive pleasure, may be highly delighted with the display of all these by the author, over whom he pores. But will this alone ever ripen his own faculties? We may listen with delight to a masterly performer on the violin, but we shall never play ourselves, if we never try. In reading, we leave a subject at the very point, where we commence when we come to write upon it. In the one case we lay hold of the author's hand and follow him implicitly wherever he may lead us; in the other we go forth alone and unaided upon the broad face of creation, with the light of heaven above, and the smiling landscape around us. The gorgeous panorama of nature, is spread out in living and ever varying colours before us, teeming with lessons of wisdom for the understanding, of beauty for the imagination, and of benevolence for the heart.

I desire not to be understood as maintaining that the student should not read at all, but that he should not make that his only mode of study. There is such a thing as too much reading—the mind may be rendered dyspeptic by too much food. Many a man has passed a busy life of what he considered profitable study, and has died at last in possession of talents to which he was a total stranger—talents which to himself were as much a secret, as if they had been conferred by Providence upon a different being.

Indeed the supposition is supported by the strongest probability that such is the fate of the great mass of mankind, and that those who have emerged from the crowd to a greater or less elevation, have been such as improved and evolved those endowments, which are common to the major portion of our race. If our first performance be at first unpromising it must not discourage us; it is the height of arrogance to expect, that we are at once to write like Burke or speak like Sheridan.

Speaking is also one of the modes of evolving the active and efficient energies of the mind, in which the operations of the intellect, are similar in kind to those in writing. Their pace is greatly accelerated, and all the higher powers are put up to their utmost speed, and tasked to their ultimate power of endurance. The speaker thinks aloud before the dread tribunal of the public; and it is not therefore to be wondered at, that men should approach that tribunal with such a degree of withering apprehension, or that the triumphs of the orator should, be regarded as in themselves so enviable. The first object of the student who aspires, to become a public speaker, is, to acquire language. This is the medium, through which his thoughts are to be communicated; and the highest perfection of language consists in presenting the flow of thought, as it actually occurs, unincumbered by pedantry or affectation, and yet undiminished by that sickly fastidiousness, which strips the conceptions of their proper dress, and pares down their outline until they are deprived of their point. By reflecting upon the operations of his intellect, the speaker will perceive that the first thing, presented to the mind in speaking, is the thought or image itself, and the next, the language in which it is to be clothed. The terms first presented by his recollection, are sometimes unpleasing to his taste, and he makes an attempt to improve them. But this is a capital error, as any attempt at emendation not only breaks the flow of his language, but, which is of more importance, it interrupts the current of his thoughts. Those habits of hesitation and perplexity, which, in so many instances deform the performances of our public speakers, are acquired in this manner. The speaker should adopt the first word that presents itself, without suffering his mind to dwell on critical niceties of expression. If he accustom his recollection to two or more trials in providing him with epithets or phrases, it will never be content with one. Fluency is but a habit, and like all other habits of value, it requires great care to acquire, and constant watchfulness to preserve it. Besides, an audience cannot, in the rapid career of an animated speaker, detect any minute imperfections in his phraseology; they will be occupied with the train of his thoughts, and their attention directed to his sentences, more than to his words,

and they will overlook many faulty expressions, if they should drop from him, the more especially if his mind is roused and filled with its subject. The only circumstance that can lead an auditory to criticise a speaker's words, will be his own doubts as to their correctness. Whenever, therefore, he has led them from his subject to a close inspection of his language, the charm is broken; the gentleman may make a very sensible speech, but it will be as frigid as sensible.

It is not intended that a speaker shall proceed in total disregard, not only of the graces and ornaments of style, but of the more ordinary qualities of correctness and precision: by no means. He must possess all these, but let him not put off their acquisition, until the moment he is called upon to speak in public. His mind must be stored and his vocabulary formed in his closet. He must write, not as a mere preparation for speaking, but as a mode of study and constant mental discipline. Let him in this manner familiarise his thoughts with the most easy and natural diction, and the higher ornaments of style, and when he rises before an audience, whether at the sacred desk, the bar, or the deliberative assembly, let him devote all his energies to his subject, and leave his language take care of itself. If his mind be filled with the knowledge that appertains to his subject—his conceptions will come forth, embodied in their most becoming drapery,—his words will arise unbidden; for habit will incorporate them intimately and inseparably with the body and texture of his thoughts.

One great object of a public speaker is to convince; but this is not his only object. Unfortunately reason is only partially concerned in the formation of men's opinions. Few men act without a motive of some kind; it is eccentric in some, in others it is made up of prejudice and passion. In politics especially, men take sides beforehand, and then resort to reason and argument to satisfy themselves, that the side they have taken, is the right one. There is moreover, an innate spirit of coquetry deeply seated in the human heart, which, although it may be convinced by reason, must still be wooed and won by persuasion. The feelings and emotions of the heart therefore, its likes and dislikes, its hopes and its fears, its joys and its sorrows, are the great engines of the orator's dominion. In the mode of combining these many coloured elements of moral power, it is evident upon reflection that there can be no universal and invariable rule, applicable alike to all times and places. Much must depend upon the occasion, but more perhaps on the character of the audience. The people of no two nations, ancient or modern, could be addressed alike upon the same subject. There are modes of sentiment and feeling peculiar to every people, which constitute the ele-

ments of their national character, and which exert a controuling influence over the manner in which they are to be approached by their public speakers. It is still less practicable, to lay down rules as to the proprieties of manner, of universal application. Who could say that Cicero, could he appear before an American audience, in all the brightness and the power of his genius, would not be considered as glowingly deficient in many points which we have been taught to regard as essential to a speaker? Who can say that Mirabeau, who rode upon the whirlwind of revolutionary France, and gave both direction and impetus to its fury; who by the power of his eloquence could lash into terrific commotion those spirits of evil, called the National Assembly, and again soothe them to repose, with the facility that the keeper of a caged lion, goads him till his eye-balls glare, and his roar makes the earth tremble, and then strokes his mane and fondles with his tusks, as if he were a mere play-thing for the amusement of an infant,—who I say would undertake that this same Mirabeau, could he appear before the commons of England, would not be voted a ranting or rhapsodical, or it may be, a ridiculous declaimer? That the great categories of human character are the same at all times and in all places is most true; the book of human nature contains the same lessons now, that it did in the brightest days of Athens and of Rome, and it is equally open for our perusal. It tells of man; of his wants, his capacities, his duties, his follies, his frailties, and his crimes. But modes of feeling, and the proprieties of manner, must bend to the accidents of time and place. They must, moreover, have some relation to the character of the speaker himself; his habits of reasoning and thinking; his moral diathesis, the powers of his voice, and even the peculiarities of his person and features, may influence, more or less the manner that will set well and gracefully upon him. Every body knows how ridiculous the servile imitators of a popular speaker always render themselves. They are in most instances mere caricatures, nor would it be more unnatural for them, without regard to size or proportions, to have their coats made by his measure. The most that can be said upon this subject is, that every speaker must rely upon his own good sense to inform him, what is natural and becoming in his own particular case, and be careful to adopt as few of the peculiarities of other men as possible. He must apply with system and perseverance, those means of improvement which are within his reach, and whatever point of elevation he may attain, it will be his consolation to reflect that he has discharged his duty to himself and his country, and made the most of those talents, which a beneficent Providence has conferred upon him: and it will be a reproach to have done less.

The present is the age of usefulness; it is the strong tendency of the public mind to bring every human pursuit to some practical account. The period is gone by, never to return, when the moral and intellectual energies of mankind, were permitted to expend themselves on toys and trifles; in which a Frenchman of gentle blood was esteemed degraded by having any concern with the loss and gain of commerce; in which an officer of the British army would have been regarded as both vulgar and unfashionable by betraying any knowledge of the language or duties of his profession; in which a tulip was, in Holland, regarded as the true representative of universal value; in which the French Empire standing at the head of the civilization and refinement of the world, was convulsed by rival factions, espousing respectively the pro and con of the question, whether the fiddlers of Germany or Italy approached the nearest to musical perfection. At this day, even in the kingdoms of Europe, where wealth and titles and the pride of birth and family, have so long attracted the homage of mankind, this same spirit of the useful and the profitable, pervades every walk and department of active life; the thinking and the judging public, passes its sentence there, as it does here, and allows to every man, that degree of consideration, to which his practical merits entitle him. Mere pedigree, however ancient and honorable, is at this day but a poor reliance for him who has to win his way to the just regards of an enlightened public. That public has long suspected and is now convinced of the fact, that one man's family is just as old as another's, and that all merit, as well as all delinquency, is merely personal. In the degree that a man possesses the capacity to enlighten his fellow creatures, by opening to their investigation new channels of thought, or to improve their condition by creating new means of comfort, or new sources of wealth, in that degree is he estimated, and in no other. Public opinion, a moral power unknown to the antient world, exerts at this day an influence uncontrollable, and irresistible in the affairs of men. The potentates of the earth dare not disregard its sovereign behests. In England it sits enthroned above king, lords commons, and in free republican America, it is stronger than the fundamental law. Look at the character of recent events in France. The king thought one way, and the nation another. The monarch was tenacious, and like Canute of old, essayed to rebuke the waves. Public opinion rolled onward, and that king is now a fugitive and a wanderer—his sceptre is committed to other hands—his diadem encumbers another brow.

If I were asked to assign the origin of this all-pervading power, as well as the cause that nourishes and sustains it, I could have but little difficulty in attributing both to the moral machinery of the press. The art of print-

ing, of which the nations of antiquity were ignorant, has imprest, in modern times, a new aspect upon the whole world and almost every thing in it. Take away the press and the results that appertain to it, from the present age, and the mass of mankind, the men and women who constitute its living and moving population, must sink at once into a state of comparative ignorance, barbarism and vice. It would place before our eyes, in the persons of our own countrymen, the very description of populace, who drove Aristides into banishment, because he was just, and conferred upon the children of Chæriphilus the freedom of their city, because their father sold salt fish; who boasted of their freedom, with a population consisting of twenty thousand freemen, and four hundred thousand slaves—who, in a moment of irritated vanity, passed sentence of death on one day, upon the whole population of Mytelene, and repenting of their cruelty revoked their sentence the next day, just in time to prevent its execution—who first listened with admiration to the moral precepts of Socrates, then made a jest of him in the public theatre, then murdered, and last of all deified him. This is no picture of the fancy; it is the authentic history of the Athenians, the most heroic, enlightened and accomplished people of the antient world. There was no such thing in those days as public opinion in the modern sense of the term: the public mind then remained unadvised of the transactions and events of the times as they daily occurred. Men lived out their lives in the world, without knowing what was going on in it, beyond their own neighborhood, and individuals, unawed by the watchfulness of the press, were left to pursue the suggestions of their own wickedness or folly, without any other restraint than what might exist in the penal sanctions of the law. How different is the state of things at the present day. Throughout the entire expanse of this Union, almost every village boasts its newspaper, and nearly every farmer, peasant and laborer is a subscriber. The number of sheets, issued and distributed weekly, is immense, and out of the whole mass, but few instances could be detected of an unsound moral tendency or coarse ungrammatical language; while the greater portion of them arise occasionally to an equality with the standard writers of the language. The only exceptions, perhaps, to this remark are to be found in seasons of party strife, when men who are naturally meddling and unquiet, get possession of a portion of the public press, and knowing, that after the ferment shall be permitted to subside and the community shall return to their wonted good feeling, they must relapse into their original and natural obscurity, they become, from necessity, the habitual fomenters and conductors of all those political and social vexations, which constitute the only drawback to the purity

and harmonious action of our institutions. With these exceptions the newspaper press of this country, may be regarded, as successfully devoted to diffusion of useful knowledge, and the maintenance of virtue. The press constitutes the intellectual glory of the present age. In the higher departments of its periodical issues—in the reviews, journals, magazines and daily papers, we are treated every day of our lives with essays, narratives, criticisms, paragraphs, disquisitions, romances in prose and verse, sketches of biography and history, thrown off with a prodigality which seems hardly to know their value, and unsurpassed in any of the characteristics of fine writing, by the literary annals of any age of the world. Every useful contrivance that is discovered, either by accident or design; every good thing that is said, nay, almost every good thought that occurs to every man, woman or child in all Christendom, immediately finds its way into the press, and through the press is communicated to every other individual of the age.

It is a consequence of this state of things, that he, who seeks to emerge into notoriety, by the superior energy of his character, or force of his understanding, must be content to do so, with the eyes of the whole world upon him. But it is a further and more important consequence of the same causes, that men of mere empty pretension,—of mere show and tinsel, cannot acquire any permanent currency, under such an intensity, and diffusion of intellectual light. The candidate for distinction, of what kind soever he may be, must come forward, prepared to add some item to the stores of useful knowledge, which was not there before. He must contribute to lighten the toils, or multiply the comforts, or sweeten the innocent enjoyments of his species, or he must extend the empire of reason, of justice or humanity, or he presents no claims, likely to be acknowledged, by the respect or admiration of the present age. This, however, presents but one side of the picture; for it is a truth equally characteristic of the times and equally encouraging to the aspirations of genius, that genuine intrinsic merit, wheresoever its lot may be cast, whether high or low its origin, whether it have ripened in the crowded city, or ranged the wild and howling wilderness, will assert its just dominion, and rise, ultimately, by its own native elasticity to the very station which nature has fitted it to fill. There is no influence that can keep it down, or rob it of its natural dominion in the affairs of men. It is no longer the prerogative of wealth or power, to smother the holy aspirations of genius, or to consign it, by a cold and chilling neglect, to an inglorious obscurity. Public opinion—imperious, impartial and enlightened public opinion, can neither be bribed nor intimidated; its decisions, when fairly

and conclusively pronounced, will always be found as independent, as they are just and impartial.

In reference to our literary position among the nations of the world, there is one circumstance, which I could wish were otherwise. It is not to be complained of, as a grievance, but rather as an alloy in our otherwise unmixed felicities. The nations of Europe have each a language, literature and laws of their own. To each belongs a peculiar and appropriate national character, with the manners, customs and institutions of a separate people. Each has its own literary glories, to be cherished as its own peculiar property. Its warriors, bards, and philosophers flourished on the soil, in which their bones were laid, and which is still the home of their descendants. But it has fared differently with our own country. We speak, it is true, the language of our ancestors; but still it is the exotic tongue of a different and distant people, while we have none that is peculiarly and separately our own. The literature, in which we participate, was transplanted to our shores after it was full grown—after all its rich and delightful associations, its poetic reminiscences, its legendary lore had taken deep root in the soil of their birth. I would not be understood as murmuring at the destiny, which a good Providence has chose to assign us. I do not complain that Shakspeare and Milton, and Newton, and Bacon were Englishmen, and not Americans; but I can well imagine how much of national pride and patriotic exultation, I could add to the reverence, with which I pronounce their names, had they been my own countrymen, and could I at this moment regard their fame as appertaining to the glory of my native land. Before the white man had opened his first clearings in the interminable forests of this western continent, England had already occupied all the high places in poetry, philosophy, history, eloquence and the drama; her seats of learning were even at that day, venerable for their antiquity and renowned for their scholarship. Hence it is that the classics of the language, which we speak, are the offspring of English intellect and genius, and that our minds, from infancy, are familiarised with English localities and scenes, English sports and pastimes, English appellations and antiquities, English sentiments and feelings. Hence it is, also, that all the streams of our literature, when pursued to their sources, lead our imaginations from home and fix them upon a standard of taste and excellence, erected in a foreign and rival country. It is by no means wonderful, therefore, that America should look with deep solicitude to the literary judgment of England in regard to the young efforts of her rising genius, nor that her mortification or chagrin should be both deep and abiding, at witnessing the invidious scoffing's and the ruffian injustice, which have too often marked the reception of those efforts, on the other side of the water.

If our situation, therefore, savour of a mental and literary dependence upon England, it has naturally grown out of our descent from, and connexion with

her, and although that dependence may be, and no doubt is, daily and hourly diminishing, it is still sufficient to be felt. But the same remark may be made also in regard to our laws; they came to us at second hand, and are based, not upon our own national epochs and history, but mainly upon the feudal polity of the Norman Conqueror. Even the most ordinary questions of *meum* and *teum*, arising between the citizens of this free and enlightened republic, cannot be adjusted in our courts at this day, without reference, more or less direct, to the military regulations of a semi-barbarous Chieftain, who flourished eight hundred years ago, in a country three thousand miles distant from our shores. I arraign not the wisdom of the common law of England, which must be admitted to furnish a remedy for every wrong, and to breathe moreover, the pure spirit of freedom and even-handed justice. I venerate all its great names; its Hales, its Cokes, its Mansfields and its Camdens, and as an American, it is perhaps but becoming to acknowledge, that our revolutionary forefathers revolted, not against the law nor against the constitution of England. Their complaint on the contrary, was, that they were wrongfully *deprived* of the blessings of both. Still, however, all our natural feelings and pride of country, are of American growth, and it is difficult to divest our minds of the unfitness and incongruity, of adducing to our courts the stale results of Saxon, Danish and Norman customs, or of carrying before our tribunals the latest decisions of the King's Bench and House of Lords. It was the policy of the Feudal Barons of old, to claim as their own, all the lands which, in case of a grant, among their tenants, were not *expressly* disposed of; therefore a grant of lands to a citizen of Maryland or New York "forever," only passes an estate for life. The word "heirs" must be inserted, to convey the whole interest. Again, the military services which the feudatory of the twelfth century, was bound to render to his liege lord, "both at home and in the wars," and the right of distress on the part of the lord, to enforce their performance, were reciprocal rights and duties in the theory of feudal tenures; therefore a rent may be assigned at this day and in this country, but not the peculiar remedy for its recovery, unless the soil be transferred also. These are but samples of the rules and reasons that make up our doctrine of real estates in the older sovereignties of this union; and they are mentioned in this place, only as they tend further to illustrate the results of our former connexion with England.

May I not mention also without impropriety in the same connection, that it is not merely the legal or the intellectual wares of England, but her more

substantial fabrics, of woollen, cotton, and iron, that have established an habitual and prescriptive market among us. It would be a subject of interesting speculation, to consider how far our dependence upon England for the ordinary comforts of life, may have arisen from her former maternal authority over us, or its continuance so long after our separation from her, may be referable to that reluctance, which is so naturally felt, when we are required to liberate the mind from long established modes of thought and action, if we had time to pursue it. The circumstances, however, that the great bulk of our importations have been from England; that our modes of life and the character of our wants naturally lead us to prefer British goods and wares to those of any other nation; and that our restrictive duties consequently, operate almost exclusively upon the interests of the British manufacturer, while in other parts of the world they occasion no sensation, are enough, independent of history, to show a connexion between us and England, or a principle of dependence upon her, more intimate, than could well be generated by the ordinary business intercourse between independent nations. Had our relations with England always been such, as take place between countries foreign to each other, it is more than probable that the character and extent of our trade with her at this day, would be in no wise different from that, which we carry on with France, Holland, or Russia. It cannot therefore be fairly doubted that the extent, to which England still retains possession of our markets, without any equivalent, is but a leaven of the old dominion, which as yet we have not had the courage to shake off. But leaving the tariff, as in duty bound, to the wisdom of our legislature, we may nevertheless indulge a becoming pride as Americans, that, though the raw materials of our prose and poetry may have been originally of foreign growth, we have the skill necessary to fashion it into new forms, and to prepare it for the use of the consumer, in great abundance and perfection of native origin. We have measured swords with England in the field of battle, and proved ourselves her equal there; we have met her on the briny deep, the peculiar field of her fame and her glory, and Englishmen themselves will admit, we were a match for her there. We have but one more trial of strength to make with her, and that is, upon the arena of her intellectual and literary renown, and it will be glory enough for our country to prove her equal there also.

And why should we not prove ourselves the equal of England in all that concerns the developements of intellect or the achievements of mind? We have the same powers of understanding, the same principles of science; the world offers to us the same beauties for the imagination and the same creations for the fancy. What is there in England that can surpass our peaceful pictures of rural simplicity and virtue; and the joyous sights and sounds that animate our everlasting hills and fill our smiling vallies? The changes of

the seasons bring in their succession, continued variations in the modes of our enjoyments. Our springs are rich in promise, and our autumns abundant in fulfilment. Our mornings sparkle with dew drops, and the eye of the poet never kindled into rapture, upon visions of beauty and magnificence more glowing, than the splendours of our setting suns. In what quarter of the globe is it, that nature exhibits her magnificence and grandeur and power, in forms more imposing, than in our own America? The mighty river rising far in the frozen north, traversing in his course, every clime inhabited by man, bearing on his banks the vegetable productions of every region of the earth, and pouring his swollen waters into the sea, under the burning rays of a tropical sun. The vast prairies of the west, spreading out their broad mantles of green in the wild silence of nature, their rank grass sighing to the night wind as it sweeps across their interminable wastes, or waving, it may be in the sunbeams, like the surges of a stormy sea. And last of all, the roaring cataract, which thundered to the listening wilderness when time was young and which still thunders over its granite precipice, in mere wantonness of power, as if in mockery of the puny arts and contrivances of men. Could it have been accorded to me to choose for myself the portion of the globe in which to pass my days, I could have no hesitation in casting my fortunes in the land which was emancipated by Washington; which exhibits all the works of nature in unwonted proportions of grandeur and magnificence; and which is destined one day to illustrate, beyond the hopes or conceptions of any former age, the dignity and true glory of our race.

The true greatness of a nation is in the fame of her distinguished men. There is no mode, in which a man can confer honor on his country more ennobling, than by elevating the character of her intellect, and exciting in the rest of the world, an interest in her history, and the character of her people, or their institutions. Who can calculate the amount of true glory, which the writings and the genius of Scott, have conferred upon the bleak hills of his native Caledonia? Who of us before the days of Sir Walter, cared about knowing the traditions of her bare-legged clans, or the legends of kilted McIvors and Rob Roy's? But the scene has changed, and the genius of one man has converted her outlandish dialect, and her uncouth patronymics into accents delightful to the ear, and thrown around her annals, the brightest charms of poetry and romance. Her bleak hills and her sterile vallies, under the touch of his enchanting wand, have been converted into classic ground, and the story of her chieftains, her clans, her covenanters and her cameronians, leaves a flavor upon the memory, like the faded joys of childhood or the music of other years.

The period has arrived for the genius of our own country to throw aside the shackles of her long continued pupilage. A reflux in that eternal tide which for ages has wafted the productions of British intellect and genius to

our shores, without taking back any equivalent in return, has already commenced. The question is no longer asked with a sneer, as if the thing were an impossibility, "who reads an American book?" American genius has conquered the repugnance of European fastidiousness on the subject of American literature. It has introduced to the enlightened and fashionable coteries of London and Paris, the painted Warrior of the wilderness, in all the self possession, the dignity and the loftiness of his nature. It has taught them to contemplate him in the domestic relations of the wigwam, in the stirring and fearful scenes of savage combat, and, as a prisoner doomed to execution, in the stern heroism of his death. It has taught, those who were wont to shudder at the mention of the tomahawk and scalping knife, to bend with eager delight over the pages that record their deeds of blood. And there is nothing in all this, indicating a change of feeling in the British public, towards our country or its literature. We see in it no anxiety to conciliate our good will, or to propitiate our friendship; we behold in it the mere impulse of those selfish principles, which induce men to seek their own gratification, wherever it is to be found.

Our country has already sent forth the fame of her arts and arms, and the bright examples of her free institutions, to the remotest regions of the earth. Her career of literary and scientific glory has just commenced. Heaven grant that her renown may be as pure, as it must be splendid, and that all her energies may be devoted forever, to the great interests of virtue, and the true happiness of mankind.

FINIS.

